

**STATEMENT OF KATHERINE H. STEVENSON, ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
BUSINESS SERVICES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING
S. 488 AND H. R. 1100, BILLS TO REVISE THE BOUNDARY OF THE CARL
SANDBURG HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN THE STATE OF NORTH
CAROLINA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

July 12, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 488 & H.R. 1100, bills that would expand the boundary of the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site (site) in the State of North Carolina.

S. 488 and H.R. 1100 would authorize the acquisition, from willing sellers, of interests in 115 acres of land for addition to the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. The bills would also authorize the use of up to 5 of these 115 acres for a visitor center and parking facilities.

The Department supports both of these bills, but would like to work with the committee to amend S. 488 to make it identical to H.R. 1100. At a hearing on April 17, 2007 in the House of Representatives, the Department testified in support of H.R. 1100, and then worked with the House subcommittee to make minor changes to make the bill more consistent with the site's 2003 General Management Plan and other recent boundary expansion bills. An amended version of H.R. 1100, containing the changes the department had suggested, passed the House of Representatives on May 23, 2007.

These bills would authorize acquiring lands or easements for the park that are estimated to cost between \$300,000 and \$2.25 million. Management of these new lands is estimated to cost less than \$10,000 annually. These acquired lands could be used for a visitor center, estimated to cost about \$3 million, but that project, as well as the costs for land acquisition, would be subject to the budget prioritization process of the NPS. Annual operation of a visitor center is expected to cost \$345,000. The costs of operating a shuttle are not known at this time. No funding has yet been identified for any of these costs.

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site currently includes 264 acres of Connemura Farm, an estate purchased by Sandburg in 1945 near the pre-Civil War resort town of Flat Rock, North Carolina. Following Sandburg's death in 1967, his wife deeded the estate to the Federal government. The National Historic Site was authorized one year later, in 1968.

Sandburg, though perhaps best known for his poetry celebrating the lives of common American people, was also a Pulitzer prize-winning biographer of Abraham Lincoln, a children's author, and a collector of folk music. Fellow author H.L. Mencken declared that Sandburg was "indubitably an American in every pulse-beat."

Acquisition of 110 of the 115 acres proposed in S. 488 and H.R. 1100 would protect the view that Carl Sandburg and his neighbors enjoyed from Big Glassy Mountain. Big Glassy overlook is the highest point at the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site and a popular stop for visitors. Sandburg and his family often visited this granite outcrop to enjoy its stunning views of

surrounding mountains and valleys. The majority of the overlook is within the authorized park boundary. However, the overlook precipice as well as the view below it, lies on private property outside the authorized boundary. Purchasing conservation easements or fee simple property rights from willing sellers would protect the overlook and views from the mountain in perpetuity.

The National Park Service contacted each landowner that holds an interest in the 110 acres proposed for acquisition during the planning process for the site's 2003 General Management Plan. The State of North Carolina purchased 22 acres within the proposed expansion to protect it until the National Park Service can acquire it. All of the other owners agreed to have their parcels included in the map and proposal to expand the park.

The acquisition of 5 acres for a visitor center and parking lot would help to solve traffic and safety problems along Little River Road, the thoroughfare that forms the site's northern boundary and provides excellent views of the site's pastures, barns, and Side Lake. When the site's existing parking area is full, vehicles enter and exit from Little River Road, searching for an open space. Some visitors park on the shoulder of Little River Road and walk to the site. The presence of park vehicles, pedestrians, and speeding traffic on Little River Road is a hazard to all. The local community has expressed concern about this issue, but there is no additional parking available in the community.

To solve these problems, the site's 2003 General Management Plan proposes acquiring up to 5

acres to build a visitor center and parking facility. In order to protect the historic character of the site, the National Park Service would like this facility to be located outside both the existing boundary and the 110 acres that are proposed to protect the overlook and views from Big Glassy Mountain. A more appropriate location would be near, but not necessarily contiguous with the park's boundary, perhaps fronting Little River Road or Highway 225. The Village of Flat Rock, North Carolina supports the proposal for a visitor center and parking facility.

H.R. 1100 has been amended to allow the National Park Service to acquire 5 acres "adjacent to or in the general vicinity of" the site's boundary. S. 488 requires that all lands required be "contiguous to" the park's boundary. We would like to work with the committee to amend S. 488 to make it consistent with H.R. 1100 and the park's 2003 General Management Plan.

S. 488 applies boundary expansion criteria from the 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act. In the 29 years since that Act was signed into law, Congressional committees and the National Park Service have developed and refined these criteria. These refined criteria are used in the version of H.R. 1100 that is being considered by the subcommittee. We would like to work with the subcommittee to amend S. 488 to make it identical to H.R. 1100.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or any members of the subcommittee might have.